

**BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO CORPORATE RESOURCES & IMPROVEMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY  
COMMITTEE**

**17 JANUARY 2016**

**REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR – OPERATIONAL AND PARTNERSHIP SERVICES**

**MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2017-18 to 2020-21 AND DRAFT  
BUDGET CONSULTATION PROCESS**

**1. Purpose of the Report**

1.1 The purpose of the report is to present the Committee with:

- a) the findings of the Budget Research and Evaluation Panel (BREP) attached at Appendix A;
- b) the responses from all the Overview & Scrutiny Committees in relation to Cabinet's draft budget proposals, attached at Appendix B.

**2. Connection to the Corporate Improvement Objectives / Other Corporate Priorities**

2.1 The improvement priorities identified in the Corporate Plan 2016-2020 have been embodied in the Overview & Scrutiny Forward Work Programmes. The amended Corporate Plan adopted by Council on 10 March 2016 formally set out the improvement priorities that the Council will seek to implement between 2016 and 2020. The Overview and Scrutiny Committees engage in review and development of plans, policy or strategies that support the Corporate Themes.

**3. Background**

3.1 In considering the challenges associated with continued budget reductions, Members of the 2013/14 BREP recognised the need for a 'whole Council' response to be adopted in managing anticipated cuts to services against a backdrop of increasing demand, public sector reform and the challenging financial outlook.

3.2 The BREP recommended that a Standing BREP be established to engage members on budget proposals as well as to enable members to feed in community intelligence gained from their representative role and engage in shaping future service provision. This recommendation was endorsed by both the Corporate Resources and Improvement Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet as part of the 2013/14 draft budget consultation process.

3.3 It was agreed that each Scrutiny Committee would nominate two members to sit on the Standing BREP. For 2016-17, the BREP consisted of:

*Cllr M Reeves (Chair of BREP and Chair of Corporate Resources and Improvement)*

*Cllr J Spanswick (Chair of Community Environment and Leisure)*

*Cllr N Clarke (Chair of Partnerships and Governance)*

*Cllr P Foley (Chair of Children and Young People)*

*Cllr Pam Davies*

*Cllr C Green*

*Cllr G Phillips*

*Cllr E Dodd*

*Cllr K Watts*

*Cllr M Butcher*

3.4 The primary purpose of the approach was :

- To achieve consensus on the direction of the budget over the life of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- To achieve a detailed overview and assessment of the budget proposals where the expertise and knowledge pertaining to each Committee service area contributes to a corporate understanding and appreciation of the draft budget proposals.
- To assist the Council to develop a budget for 2017/18 that aims to meet the needs of the communities of Bridgend County Borough.
- To facilitate firmer understanding of the budget setting process and the draft proposals in order to assist the Committees in making informed comments, constructive challenge or recommendations to Cabinet as part of the budget consultation process.

### **Methodology**

3.5 The Standing BREP has met on six separate occasions and examined by means of semi-structured interviews with Directors and Officers the Budget Strategy for the Council as a whole.

3.6 The Panel also determined to focus their work on a few specific areas to examine in detail in order to assist with informing the budget proposals and also to ensure that there was no duplication between the work of the Panel and that of the individual Committees.

3.7 The three areas chosen were:

1. Collaboration with Town and Community Councils
2. The 1% proposed efficiency saving for schools
3. The proposed Community Action Fund

- 3.8 Detailed information was requested from Officers to inform discussions regarding the rationale behind the early draft proposals, their impact and how they linked to the Corporate priorities.
- 3.9 As well as meeting with the Chief Executive early on in the Panel's meetings, the BREP also invited the Cabinet Member – Resources/Deputy Leader to attend each meeting to be part of the BREP process.
- 3.10 Further to this, the Panel determined to invite external invitees such as Town Clerks and representative Headteachers to attend specific meetings and provide their perspectives on relevant draft proposals.

#### **4. Current Situation / Proposal**

- 4.1 The Corporate Resources and Improvement Overview & Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider the findings of the Budget Research and Evaluation Panel and determine whether the recommendations should be forwarded to Cabinet along with the consolidated responses from all five Overview and Scrutiny Committees as part of the budget consultation process.
- 4.2 To assist Members in their deliberations, the other Chairs of Overview & Scrutiny Committees have been invited as representatives of their Committees as well as nominated members of the Panel. The Deputy Leader and the Head of Finance have also been invited to attend to facilitate discussions.

#### **5. Effects on the Policy Framework and Procedure Rules**

- 5.1 This item relates to the role of Overview & Scrutiny Committees as consultees in respect of the budget setting process.

#### **6. Equalities Impact**

- 6.1 The report received by cabinet on 12 January 2016 on the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2016-17 to 2019-20 states that the proposals contained within the report cover a wide range of services and it is inevitable that the necessary budget reductions will impact on the local population in different ways. In developing these proposals, Officers reported that consideration has been given to their potential impact on protected groups within the community and on how to avoid a disproportionate impact on people within these groups.
- 6.2 The cabinet report further stated that Equality Impact Assessments will be undertaken on all budget reduction proposals before the final recommendations are made concerning next year's revenue budget.

#### **7. Financial Implications**

- 7.1 The report relates to the budget setting process and the financial implications associated with that.

## 8. Recommendations

The Committee is asked to determine whether it wishes to submit the recommendations outlined at Appendix A and B to Cabinet as part of the budget consultation process, subject to any modifications and amendments that the Committee decides are appropriate.

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### **Background Documents:**

Bridgend County Borough Council Constitution  
Part II of the Local Government Act 2000: Executive Arrangements